

Art of California

JANUARY 1990

FIVE DOLLARS





Picnic Basket with Books, 1944

oil on canvas, 25 x 30 inches

Arlington Gallery

as early as Hansen's Denmark years, he really hit his personal stride by the mid 1930s, when he used gouache or opaque watercolors like oils. Hansen made drawings throughout his lifetime, from the very earliest self portraits (1900), through a series of pastel portraits made in the early 1920s, through preliminary sketches for paintings, to complete exhibition drawings which won awards. His sculptures took the form of portrait busts. These were sculpted first in clay; then a plaster mold was taken, then the plaster head cast. Pigment was rubbed in. Hansen was attracted to faces with interesting contours, such as that of Sadakichi Hartmann.

Hansen died on September 26, 1965 after a long illness. He had led a quietly creative life and left the world a rich legacy of serious, intelligent achievements. A mark of respect with

which he was held is the over twenty one-man shows at museums and non-commercial art galleries including shows at the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery, the Los Angeles County Museum, and the Pasadena Art Museum. In an era when some museums are divesting themselves of a surplus of early-California paintings which have not yet stood the test of time, it is significant that the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, raised a substantial amount of money in 1980 to acquire Hansen's great *Portrait of Sadakichi Hartmann*.

Hansen was one of the few artists who understood that it is not what one paints but how one paints it that is important. He was a "classic" artist, one who speaks universal truths that will always be spiritually satisfying to any generation that views his works. □

THE SANTA CRUZ ISLAND COLLECTION

By Lynn Carlisle

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hen Dr. Carey Stanton left his medical practice in 1957 to live and work on his father's ranch, he made more than just a simple commitment to his family's business. With that move, Stanton changed the course of his life and found an avocation stronger than that of practicing medicine. For the senior Stanton's ranch was no ordinary cattle ranch occupying ordinary acreage; in fact, the Stanton family ranch occupied nine-tenths of the largest, privately held island off the coast of the continental United States—Santa Cruz Island.

The largest of the eight Channel Islands, Santa Cruz Island hangs on the horizon just 25 miles off shore from Santa Barbara. Once home to a thriving population of Chumash Indians, the island holds a romantic fascination for anyone who catches a glimpse of it when the coastal fog lifts. The island's romance certainly captivated Carey Stanton. More than just the site of a successful cattle operation, the island became Stanton's career, his occupation, his avocation until his death in December, 1987.

Nine years before his death, Stanton sold Santa Cruz Island to The Nature Conservancy, a private, environmentally based organization. A stipulation of the sale allowed Stanton to live

undisturbed on the island until his death. Upon his demise, Stanton's effects, including several impressive collections, went to the Santa Cruz Island Foundation, an association that Stanton himself founded in order to continue his work of collecting, documenting and preserving island history, island artifacts and island art.

Marla Daily, president of the Santa Cruz Island Foundation, notes that Stanton's collections stand as testimony to his complete absorption in his family's island. In addition to collecting clocks, books, antique furniture and early American silver, Stanton maintained a unique collection of paintings. During his 30 years in residence on Santa Cruz Island, Stanton acquired over one hundred paintings, almost all dealing with the island in some fashion, either seen from shore or depicting a familiar bay in his domain. During Stanton's lifetime, Daily acted as his mainland agent. She recalls that he was not bound by his criteria to collect island art: "He never bought a painting he didn't like," asserts Daily. Surprisingly Stanton could choose from a wide array of artists. Among others, the Stanton island collection includes works by Carl Oscar Borg, Ludmilla Welch, Alexander Harmer, Lockwood De Forest,

William Louis Otte and Dewitt Parshall.

But one painter—Richard Diebenkorn—holds a special place in Stanton's collection, for he was a personal friend to Stanton and painted his friend's island from an intimate perspective. The collection contains 48 intriguing examples of Diebenkorn's work, from a painted cigar-box lid and a graphic cartoon to several full-scale oils. Certain selections document the process that leads from sketch to finished painting, others depict a familiar island scene during separate years. Some pieces the artist gave to his friend, some Stanton purchased through Diebenkorn's dealer in San Francisco, and some do not deal with the island at all. Seen in its entirety, the Diebenkorn portion of the Stanton collection, represents one of the largest private groupings of the artist's work in the world.

Marla Daily relates that Richard Diebenkorn is an intensely private man, a trait he shared with his late friend. Their closely guarded friendship began when the men were roommates together at Stanford in 1940. When Diebenkorn married in 1943, Stanton stood as his best man. Later, Stanton became godfather to one of Diebenkorn's two children. In 1958, one year after Stanton moved to Santa Cruz Island to help his father Edwin Stanton run the ranch operation, Diebenkorn made a protracted visit to his friend in his new home. Fifteen of the 27 paintings Diebenkorn executed of Santa Cruz Island are dated 1958, during his so-called representational period.

Life on the island was leisurely and rich in images for Diebenkorn's palette. He painted the family's favorite beach, Coches Prietos (Dark Pigs), the ranch grounds and, of course, his friend Stanton. The collection includes several portraits of Stanton. Considering them together, Marla Daily points out that each portrait gives distinctive treatment to Stanton's eyes. One loosely painted watercolor depicts Stanton sleeping; another represents Stanton with bold strokes, a red nose and hollow eye sockets; still another offers a traditional portrait sketch, but the subject's eyes are closed; a fourth presents Stanton's eyes only, staring intensely out of the painting.

The collection contains another fascinating set of images of the same scene, including two drawings, a watercolor and an oil. This group illuminates an intriguing overlay of intimate knowledge of island life with Diebenkorn's distinct vision of his idyllic environment. Produced in

1958, the series begins with two ballpoint-pen and black-wash images that depict the view from the upstairs sitting room of the ranch's historic Justinian house. Built by a former owner of the island, the circa 1855 house served as Carey Stanton's private quarters on the island. The bold pair of images work outward from the frame of a screen door through which the picture draws the eye over an island-made wrought-iron railing on which a dog bed drapes for airing, beyond the roof and across the yard to the two island winery buildings. The brilliantly hued watercolor gives a similar representational treatment to the scene, but adds another dog bed to the railing. The oil, presumably the final of the four pieces, pushes beyond the representational, removes the central winery buildings and presents the scene in the abstract. Still identifiable, each remaining element in the picture—the screen door, the railing, the roof and the dog beds—serve to anchor the bottom half of the image, while the area occupied by the winery in the other three pieces in the series opens to a spacious horizon. Interestingly, the representational watercolor bears the title *Winery, Santa Cruz Island*, while the abstract oil is called *View of Ocean, Santa Cruz Island*.

Another island scene clearly fascinated Diebenkorn, so much so that he painted it twice, once in 1958 (ball-point pen and watercolor) and again in 1963 (oil on masonite). Given the angle and depth of the shadows, he must have painted both works at the same time of year and at the same time of day. Aside from a slight change in the angle of the point of view, Marla Daily notes that the only significant compositional difference between the paintings is the addition of an incinerator to the right of the trees in the second version, an amenity Stanton installed in 1962.

Diebenkorn's treatment of his island subjects reflects a clear intimacy with island life. A figure study of Stanton and his ranch manager Henry Duffield indicates an informal spontaneity that one rarely glimpses in the body of so accomplished an artist's work. Indeed, the obvious closeness between Diebenkorn and Stanton further infuses the collection with an appealing vitality. Diebenkorn signed many of his sketches and paintings in this collection with the name "Witz," a nickname Stanton used for his friend. Daily reports that in sifting through the hundreds of items stored at the ranch, she found the easel and painting board that Diebenkorn



William Hahn

Mexican Cattle Drivers

oil on canvas, 25 x 40 inches

used when on the island; each piece bears the simple identifying marker "Witz's."

Diebenkorn's aesthetic relationship with the island was apparent in all the island works. As a fitting homage to Santa Cruz, Diebenkorn designed a special flag for the island, a place that seems like a country unto itself. A cross on a hill, the historical symbol for La Isla de la Santa Cruz (Island of the Holy Cross), stands in white against a background of green for the island's green inland valleys, and blue for the sky and the surrounding ocean. In conceiving the flag's design, Diebenkorn created several versions. All reside in the Stanton collection.

Despite the painter's personal and aesthetic relationships with the island, not all of the 48 Diebenkorn's in the collection depict Santa Cruz Island. As one of the artist's early patrons, Stanton continued to collect his friend's work throughout his life. The collection demonstrates many facets of Diebenkorn's work and chronicles his passage from one period to another; the earliest work, *Palo Alto Circle*, dates from 1943, the latest 1980. And the collection includes examples of Diebenkorn's work in several different media: watercolor, oil, drypoint, charcoal, gouache, ball-point pen, marker and

crayon in everything from completed, full-scale oils to artist's proofs and Christmas cards. Currently, one drawing from the collection, *View from Studio, Ocean Park, 1964*, is touring with *The Drawings of Richard Diebenkorn*, an exhibition that originated at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Stanton clearly prized Diebenkorn's work. While Stanton lived on the island, almost all of the Diebenkorn portion of the collection hung in Stanton's bedroom and private sitting room. In fact, Diebenkorn's renderings of the views from that sitting room's windows hung next to the very same windows: for example, Diebenkorn's painting of the ranch flagpole with its American, Mexican and California flags (and later Diebenkorn's island flag replacing the Mexican flag) hung next to the window through which Stanton could see the flagpole.

Carey Stanton filled the remainder of the Justinian House and the ranch's other living quarters, the Phoenix House, with art. Stanton began the collection in 1950, when he gave a classic Western painting by William C. Hahn (1829-1887) titled *Mexican Cattle Drivers* to his parents for their thirtieth wedding anniversary. Painted in 1881 by the German genre painter,



Alexander Harmer

Santa Cruz Island below Valdez Harbor

oil on canvas, 16 x 24 inches

the large oil is the most significant Western painting in the collection.

Choosing to depict scenes of everyday human activity instead of the then-popular landscape, William Hahn presented an almost narrative realism in his pictures. Born in Germany in 1829 to a family of weavers, butchers and tavernkeepers, Hahn studied art for six years in Düsseldorf and Dresden. After establishing a reputation as a painter of reknown in Germany, the painter immigrated to Boston where he shared a studio with landscape painter William Keith. In 1872, one year after his immigration to the United States, he traveled to San Francisco with Keith. There his work met with curiosity, at first, and later, success. Hahn joined the popular Charles Christian Nahl as one of the few genre painters on the West Coast. Since Hahn's realistic style contrasted starkly with Nahl's romanticized images, reviews were decidedly mixed.

However, Hahn's treatment of everyday life appealed to the San Francisco art world and Hahn began to show his work in several exhibits of the time. He stayed in San Francisco until

1878, then traveled to New York for one year before returning to San Francisco to paint for three more years. During those years, Hahn painted Stanton's *Mexican Cattle Drivers*. According to the catalogue of a 1979 exhibit of Hahn's work at the Oakland Art Museum, this painting, once titled *California Cattle Drivers*, represented only one version of the subject matter, which Hahn followed with a more complicated painting titled *Mexican Cattle Drivers in Southern California*, which Hahn completed from sketches in London in 1883. In the Oakland catalogue, curator Marjorie Dakin Arkelian describes a painting of cowboys and three cattle. She then states, "The location of this painting—sold in the 1950s by an eastern gallery—is not known. This canvas was exhibited at the San Francisco Art Association in 1881." The missing painting and the *Mexican Cattle Drivers* in the Stanton collection are one in the same.

Although Carey Stanton began his collection with an important Western painting, he did not enlarge the art collection until he moved to the island in 1957. Then, he began to collect books that dealt with all the Channel Islands, concen-



DeWitt Parshall

Arched Rock, Santa Cruz Island

oil on board, 10 x 12 in.

trating on those that mentioned Santa Cruz Island. That search led to art and artifacts of island life, a search that consumed his remaining 30 years on the island.

In 1973, Stanton and Marla Daily worked together to catalogue the extensive library that he had assembled. She became Stanton's eyes and ears on the mainland for word of books or art or anything that had anything to do with the island. On one occasion, Daily spotted in a Santa Barbara newspaper a photo of a boy operating a cider press. The picture's caption read that the press had come from Santa Cruz Island. Daily alerted Stanton of the press's existence, and he authorized her to track down its current owners and try to procure it for his collection. Her efforts were successful, and the cider press returned to the island.

In addition to locating island-iana on the mainland, Stanton acted as curator, so to speak, for island artifacts that remained on the island. During the early sheep ranching years in the 1880s, island workers crafted simple furniture from redwood imported from Northern California. Stanton furnished his small study with sev-

eral of these pieces. An island smithy also fashioned all the wrought iron found at the main ranch, a fact about which Stanton was understandably proud. In addition, he preserved early nineteenth-century saddles, vehicles and farm equipment. And, he maintained detailed records of ranch operations and island weather, records that had been kept by the island's inhabitants since the end of the nineteenth century.

Besides books, artifacts and paintings, Stanton collected maps of the Channel Islands. Two of these tell an interesting story concerning the American artist, James McNeil Whistler. In 1854, the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey commissioned Whistler to do a scene of Anacapa Island, another of the Channel Islands, that would accompany a map of the islands. The artist complied, but added seagulls to the familiar view of the Anacapa arch, a detail his superiors did not appreciate. Although the 1854 map bears Whistler's etching complete with seagulls, an 1856 reprint of the map shows the view without seagulls. Stanton collected both maps.

(James Madison Alden, then the director of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, was also a



Richard Diebenkorn *View of Ocean, Santa Cruz Island*
oil on canvas, 19 1/4 x 14 1/4 inches

watercolorist. In 1855, he painted what may be the first view of Santa Cruz Island. Ironically, Carey Stanton was never able to acquire the painting for his island collection.)

Among the historical island paintings, one large oil stands out. *Captain McGuire Catching Seal*, circa 1908, depicts several human figures in the foreground putting seals into wooden crates. In the background looms a gigantic cavern surrounded by rock and ocean. The cave depicted is called Painted Cave and is large enough for a sixty-foot boat to motor into it for several hundred feet. Well-known as a favorite haunt for seals, the cave's depths echo, even today, with their bark. Seal catchers throughout the century placed nets across the cave's entrance and waited for their prey to swim into them and become entangled. Carl Oscar Borg's early work documents the results of this practice.

The artist became familiar with the seal catchers' techniques during the summer of 1908 when he left the Los Angeles artists' colony of Garavanza headed by Charles Lummis and spent six

weeks on the Channel Islands, reports Helen Laird in her biography of Borg, titled *Carl Oscar Borg and the Magic Region*. Although the islands were considered remote at that time, Borg had visited them before, in the company of his friend, landscape painter William Wendt. When Borg decided to sojourn on the islands in 1908, he could only find transportation with a crew of seal hunters. He writes: "It is about the wildest place you can possibly think of but good to paint. . . . I have been over on the biggest of the islands and it is great stuff for pictures. It is more desolate than the desert, with rocks and a few straggly pines and a gale blowing about sixty miles an hour, but great colors—brilliant as opal." During the summer, Borg's funds ran out and he joined the seal hunting work crews. According to Laird, the captain of the seal hunters' vessel, Captain George McGuire, also owned a motion picture theater on State Street in Santa Barbara. He purchased one of Borg's pictures for his theater. Another painting from this period, and possibly Stanton's *Captain McGuire Catching Seal*, titled *The Capture of Seals at Painted Cave*, took a blue ribbon at the International Exposition in Seattle in 1909.

A contemporary of Borg, Alexander Harmer, is another well-known California artist who found his way to Santa Cruz Island with his paintbrush in hand. Known as "The Artist of the Apaches," Harmer first started sketching when he joined the army at the age of sixteen. Assigned to the Geronimo wars in Arizona, Harmer had ample opportunity to sketch the Apache way of life. Between stints in the army, Harmer studied painting and drawing at the Philadelphia School of Fine Arts, notably, with the realist painter Thomas Eakins. Harmer carried that sense of realism throughout all of his later work.

In 1894, Harmer adopted California as his home. He married a young girl from an established California family and began to paint his surroundings. On several occasions, he made forays to Santa Cruz Island, and painted many of its coves and bays. Carey Stanton particularly enjoyed two Harmers in his collection, both painted of the same bay but during different weather conditions: one under a sunny sky, the other on a gray day. The pair evokes the different moods of the island and demonstrates the artist's ability to capture the subtle coloration and shadow in the island's pristine landscape.

Surprising detail also characterizes another



Richard Diebenkorn

Square

watercolor & ball point on paper, 10 1/4 x 14 1/4 inches

outstanding view of the island painted in 1919 by William Louis Otte, a student of Carl Oscar Borg where he taught at the Santa Barbara School of Arts. Working with pastels on paper, Otte captured the delicacy of a sunlit island coastal scene.

During his stay in Santa Barbara, Carl Oscar Borg became friends with several other Santa Barbara artists including Ed Borein, Dewitt Parshall and Lockwood De Forest. During his lifetime, Carey Stanton collected a few of Parshall's island pictures as well as a half-dozen of Borein's etchings—even though they did not represent the island. Since Stanton's death, the Foundation has added to the collection by acquiring ten oil paintings of the island by De Forest, a gentleman painter who maintained a studio in Santa Barbara. Interestingly, De Forest painted a scene of Valdez Cave on the island from an almost identical perspective as did Alexander Harmer.

Along with the Santa Cruz Island Foundation's vice president and treasurer Eric P. Hvolboll

and secretary David D. Watts, Foundation president Marla Daily hopes to enlarge the art collection that Carey Stanton began. "We will focus all our attention on the Channel Islands, specifically Santa Cruz Island," notes Daily. Although Stanton did not collect any modern or contemporary art aside from the Diebenkorns, the Foundation recently acted on its mandate of island-oriented collecting by acquiring a lovely Meredith Abbott oil that depicts a field of fennel at Prisoners' Harbor.

During his lifetime, Dr. Carey Stanton considered himself a steward of the magnificent Santa Cruz Island. He protected its boundaries, studied its history and preserved art that glorified this natural treasure. Today the Santa Cruz Island Foundation plans to follow Stanton's example and hopes to perform as an excellent stewardship of Stanton's effects. With such a brilliant and varied basis on which to build, the Santa Cruz Island Foundation has the opportunity to pay fitting tribute to La Isla de la Santa Cruz. □